

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 /074 W
-----108447 032230Z /63

R 032114Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6432
INFO AMCONSUL BREMEN
AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF
AMCONSUL FRANKFURT
AMCONSUL HAMBURG
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMCONSUL STUTTGART
USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

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USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, GW
SUBJECT: MAJOR STRIKE IN METAL MANUFACTURING APPEARS
UNAVOIDABLE LOCAL STRIKES AND LOCKOUTS IN NEWSPAPER
PRINTING CONTINUE

REF: (A) BONN 03579; (B) DUSSELDORF 351;
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(C) DUSELDORF 360; (D) BONN 02766

SUMMARY: CURRENT WAGE DISPUTES IN MAJOR PARTS OF THE
GERMAN ECONOMY HAVE BEEN SHARPENING IN RECENT DAYS.
THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE METALWORKERS UNION
(IG METALL), APPROVED REQUESTS BY THE UNION'S REGIONAL
BARGAINING COMMISSIONS IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA AND

NORTH BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG TO HOLD STRIKE VOTES AMONG THE MORE THAN 1 MILLION ORGANIZED METALWORKERS IN THESE AREAS ON MARCH 7 AND 8. THE PRINTING AND PAPER WORKERS UNION (IG DRUCK UND PAPIER) BEGAN A SERIES OF SELECTIVE STRIKES IN NEWSPAPER ESTABLISHMENTS IN MAJOR CITIES THROUGHOUT THE FRG ON FEBRUARY 28. THE PRINTING EMPLOYERS RESPONDED BY IMPOSING LOCAL SELECTIVE LOCKOUTS. MAJOR NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS DID NOT COME OUT ON MARCH 3. THE GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATED NO INTENTION SO FAR TO OFFER ITS GOOD OFFICES AS MEDIATOR. END SUMMARY.

1. THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE METALWORKERS UNION (IG METALL), A DGB (GERMAN TRADE UNION FEDERATION) AFFILIATE, WILL DECIDE ON A POSSIBLE STRIKE ON MARCH 9, AFTER HAVING OBTAINED RESULTS OF THE STRIKE VOTES BY THE UNION MEMBERS IN NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIA AND NORTH BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AREAS. UNION QUARTERS HAVE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THERE IS NO INTENTION TO RESUME TALKS WITH THE EMPLOYERS BEFORE THE STRIKE VOTE HAS BEEN TAKEN. THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL METAL EMPLOYERS' FEDERATION (GESAMTMETALL) SAID THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE IN POLITICAL MEDIATION, BUT WOULD PREFER A SUMMIT MEETING BETWEEN THE HEADS OF GESAMTMETALL AND IG METALL WHERE A SETTLEMENT ATTEMPT COULD BE MADE.

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2. BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG MINISTER PRESIDENT FILBINGER (CDU) HAS APPEALED TO MANAGEMENT AND LABOR "TO BE AWARE OF THEIR OVERALL ECONOMIC RESPONSIBILITY AND TO EXHAUST ALL POSSIBILITIES FOR NEGOTIATIONS." HE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE QUESTION OF MEDIATION BY THE BADEN-WUERTTEMBERG GOVERNMENT IS OUT OF QUESTION AT PRESENT.

3. A FEW DAYS AGO, THE DGB-AFFILIATED PRINTING AND PAPER WORKERS UNION (IG DRUCK UND PAPIER) CALLED SELECTIVELY TARGETED STRIKES AGAINST MAJOR NEWSPAPER PRINTING ESTABLISHMENTS IN MUNICH, DUESSELDORF, WUPPERTAL AND KASSEL FOR AN UNLIMITED TIME PERIOD, WHICH ARE CONTINUING. THE EMPLOYERS IN THE PRINTING INDUSTRY HAVE RESPONDED TO THE UNION ACTION BY IMPOSING LOCAL LOCKOUTS WHICH WERE ORIGINALLY LIMITED, BUT WHICH HAVE BEEN EXTENDED ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS. THE UNION DOES NOT EXPECT AN EARLY END OF THE CONFLICT AND POINTS OUT THAT IT WILL NOT HAVE ANY FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES IN HOLDING OUT FOR ANOTHER 2 TO 3 WEEKS.

4. DGB PRESIDENT VETTER RECENTLY STATED THAT THE PRINTERS' UNION HAS A CLAIM TO FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE DGB SOLIDARITY FUND. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT THE DGB MAY URGE ITS AFFILIATES TO SPONSOR "SOLIDARITY STRIKES" TO SUPPORT THE FIGHT OF THE PRINTERS UNLESS

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THE EMPLOYERS AGREE TO RESUME NEGOTIATIONS.

5. TOP MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES IN THE PRINTING AND NEWSPAPER PUBLISHING INDUSTRY, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAVE REAFFIRMED THEIR UNCOMPROMISING ATTITUDE. THE PRESI-

DENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS,
JOHANNES BINKOWSKI, SAID IN A RADIO INTERVIEW THAT THE
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EMPLOYERS ARE NOT PREPARED TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS.
HE ALSO REJECTED GOVERNMENT MEDIATION EFFORTS SINCE
"THE EMPLOYERS HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER GOING BEYOND THEIR
PREVIOUS PROPOSALS." GEROLD MACK, CHIEF MANAGEMENT
NEGOTIATOR, SAID THAT A RESUMPTION OF COLLECTIVE BAR-
GAINING NEGOTIATIONS IS IMPOSSIBLE AS LONG AS THE UNION
LEADERSHIP IS UNABLE TO HAVE ITS RANK AND FILE RECOGNIZE
A COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT FREELY NEGOTIATED BETWEEN LABOR
AND MANAGEMENT REPRESENTATIVES AS WAS RECENTLY THE
CASE (REF D).

6. AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF THE ESCALATING INDUSTRIAL
DISPUTES IN PRINTING AND METAL MANUFACTURING, WAGE
NEGOTIATIONS OPENED IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES (REF A),
IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND IN PRIVATE BANKING.
IN THE PUBLIC SERVICES, NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BEEN POST-
PONED UNTIL MARCH 17, IN BANKING UNTIL MARCH 16, WHILE
TALKS IN CONSTRUCTION ARE STILL CONTINUING. MANAGE-
MENT AND LABOR REPRESENTATIVES IN THESE INDUSTRIES
TACITLY AGREED TO WAIT FOR THE OUTCOME OF THE WAGE
DISPUTE IN METAL MANUFACTURING.

7. COMMENT: IN SPITE OF THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF
A MAJOR INDUSTRY-WIDE STRIKE IN METAL MANUFACTURING
IN ADDITION TO THE CURRENT WALKOUT IN NEWSPAPER PRINT-
ING, THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN GENERALLY SILENT AND THERE
ARE NO INDICATIONS OF ANY GOVERNMENT MEDIATION EFFORTS
WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS. THE RELUCTANCE OF THE
CHANCELLOR MAY BE EXPLAINED BY THE UNFRIENDLY COMMENTS
ON THE PART OF HIS COALITION PARTNER, THE FDP, CAUSED
BY THE SUCCESSFUL, BUT "COSTLY POLITICAL MEDIATION"
MADE BY HAMBURG MAYOR KLOSE (SPD) IN THE DOCKWORKERS'
STRIKE (REF D) AND NORTH RHINE-WESTPHALIAN LABOR AND
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SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER FARTHMANN (SPD) IN THE STEEL
WAGE DISPUTE (REF A). ANY GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION,
THEREFORE, APPEARS TO BE UNLIKELY AT THE PRESENT STAGE
OF DEVELOPMENTS, AND A STRIKE IN THE METAL INDUSTRY
HAS BECOME ALMOST UNAVOIDABLE.
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